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TWO REVOLUTIONS: A PARALLEL, AND A QUERY

The so recently celebrated centenary of the return of the House of Orange to the throne of Holland at the decline of the Napoleonic régime affords pointed opportunity for the student of comparative history to reflect upon a curious illustration of the saying that history does, indeed, repeat itself. For the man conversant with Motley's monumental *Rise of the Dutch Republic* and *History of the Netherlands*, on the one hand, and, on the other, with any of those splendid chronicles of the American struggle for liberty, set to paper by Bancroft or Fiske, Lodge or Trevelyan, cannot but be amazed, upon even short reflection, to realize how the great war for freedom waged by Holland against Spain is paralleled and, as it were, reflected in the war for the same end waged by the New World colonies against Great Britain. The three cardinal points of analogy are to be found in the causes for rebellion, the sovereigns responsible for them, and the native chieftains who inspired the patriots with righteous confidence.

In 1565 the Netherlands, a rich and fertile land peopled by a serious, vigorous, and honest class, remonstrated with its sovereign, Philip II of Spain, because he sought to invade the constitutional liberty and security of its citizens, imbued with the spirit and faith of Luther, by compelling them to remain in the Roman Church through that horrible institution of Torquemada's, the Inquisition, and, because, to further aid him, he quartered among them some thousands of Spanish troops. Later on he thrust upon them by his representative, the Duke of Alva, ruinous and arbitrary taxation, thus increasing their grievances. In 1765 George III of Great Britain sought to invade the constitutional rights of the American Colonies by imposing upon them taxation without representation, and in 1768 sent regiments of British soldiers to assist in forcing measures which his subjects on this side of the water justly condemned.

Philip II was twenty-eight years of age when he became King of Spain. He was narrow, bigoted, cruel, and insanely persistent. George III was twenty-two years of age when he as-

cended the throne of England, and he, also, was narrow, bigoted, cruel, and insanely persistent, with such difference, only, in degree and exhibition, as the evolutionary processes of two hundred years insisted upon. Just as Philip was constantly sending criminal informations against citizens of the Netherlands for refusing to conform to his edicts, which informations, in the early days of the differences with Spain, when Cardinal Granville and Margaret of Parma executed the orders of the king, were tantamount to being tried in Spain with no hope of any constitutional rights whatever, so George commanded General Gage to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock and transport them to England that they might be tried for treason. As Philip virtually annulled the ancient charters of Brabant and Holland so did George annul the charter of Massachusetts.

William, Prince of Orange, surnamed "The Silent," aristocratic, high-souled, and dominant, was the "Father of his Country" in this great crisis. George Washington was about thirty-two years of age when the Stamp Act was passed in 1765,—exactly the age of William in 1565. He, also, was aristocratic, high-souled, and dominant, and became the "Father of his Country" in a way and sense which that country can never forget.

As the Netherlands were slow to decide upon a complete divorce from Spain, so were the American Colonies slow to separate from the mother country. As the Netherlands professed to Margaret and Granville the famous Compromise and the equally famous Request of 1566, so did the Continental Congress several times respectfully petition England before breaking into open rebellion.

As the United Provinces, assembled at the Hague on July 26th, 1581, declared their independence and renounced forever their allegiance to the Spanish Philip, so it was in the self-same month, less than two centuries later, that the United Colonies, assembled in Philadelphia, declared their independence and renounced forever their allegiance to the British George. Before their declaration, the Dutch had had the campaign against Alva, the siege of Haarlam, and the seige of Leyden. Before their declaration, Americans had had the battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker

Hill. As William was in the earlier period set over the troops of the Netherlands, so was Washington put in command of the Colonial Army. As in the early days of the revolt against Spain, William met with mutiny in the army and luke-warmness among the people, so likewise did Washington; and as without William at this juncture there would never have been a free Netherlands commonwealth, so without Washington at the similar juncture here there would never have been a free United States.

As Orange obeyed reluctantly the call to take the helm of state in his self-constituted nation, so was it with Washington; and as the immortal Prince was offered and refused kingship, so was a crown offered to our immortal Commoner and refused by him. William died in 1584, long before his country realized the fruition of his dreams and hopes. Therefore he does not appear to approach Washington so closely in military genius as he does in the attributes of civil greatness. It was his son, Maurice of Nassau, who continued the war with Spain to the triumphant conclusion of 1609, when the mother country acknowledged the independence of the provinces, who resembles so much our Revolutionary chieftain in the consummate skill with which he governed warlike manœuvres.

The parallel which strikes one most in these two great contests for national existence is that which lies in the efforts of each country to maintain a union. There were three attempts to create one on the part of the seven provinces of the Netherlands. The first was made in 1574 and consisted of a provincial government with the Prince at the head; the second was the Union of Brussels in 1577, intended to strengthen that already formed, and the third and last was the Union of Utrecht in 1579, ever regarded as the foundation of the Netherlands Republic, and, later on, of the Kingdom of Holland. Likewise there were three attempts on the part of our Colonies to perpetuate union. The first, in 1774, resulted in the formation of the Continental Congress. The second, in 1777, took the shape of Articles of Confederation, a somewhat crude form of government, under which the new nation acted until 1787, when that Constitution was born which is the organic law of the States to-day.

Not a few other figures and tints go to make yet more com-

plete this remarkable picture of international likeness. As Holland was the moving spirit in the early stages of the Dutch revolt, so was Massachusetts in the early stages of the war with England. The Netherlands army had its Benedict Arnolds in Seigneur de la Motte, a nobleman who commanded a regiment, and was governor of Gravelines, but who went over to the royal side for a consideration, and in Philip Egmont, a weak and uncertain man, son of Count Egmont, who commanded a regiment and subsequently deserted to Spain, becoming in time one of the foremost men in that army. Another traitor of the Arnold stripe was Count Vander Berg, William's brother-in-law, who bound himself to deliver some of the principal cities into the hands of the Prince of Parma, one of Philip's generals; the unstable Count Henry Brederode, who was at first a patriot, but who at last fell by the wayside. The juggling ambitious Counts Horn and Egmont, who tried to carry water on both shoulders, have their counterparts in the shifty and envious generals Charles Lee and Horatio Gates of the Revolutionary forces. William de la Marck, chief of "The Beggars of the Sea," was followed later on by Paul Jones and his primitive navy. The pseudo Indians, who threw overboard the tea in 1765, had their prototypes in "The Beggars," who, led by Brederode, made many extravagant and noisy demonstrations against Spanish power in the earlier part of the troublous days. In his influence upon the politics of the Netherlands and such constitutional life as it had, John van Olden Barneveldt threw upon that critical period a composite reflection of the persons of Madison, Hamilton, and John Marshall.

It cannot be expected, in the nature of events, to find exact historical likeness. Therefore, aside from the one greatest point of divergence between the revolutionary movements here compared—the notable discrepancy in the duration of the struggles; that of the Old World filling over two score years and that of the New being played to a successful close in less than a single decade—there are two other details of difference to be marked. These are found in the superiority of the Spanish armies sent into the Netherlands over the British armies sent into the Colonies, and in the weak union of the Dutch States as

compared with the strong union of the American. Speaking to this point, Motley said of the Netherlands, under the Union of Utrecht: "It was to differ from the American federal commonwealth in the great feature that it was to be merely a confederacy of sovereignties, not a representative Republic. Its foundation was a compact, not a constitution."

When all is said and done, however, probably no two revolutions were so much alike as these, and, because of this, the pertinent inquiry arises as to why the Dutch Republic has failed to maintain its one-time rank and power at the council table of the nations while the United States has become one of the most influential states on earth. There is partial explanation in the invincible, organic union which has bound our commonwealths together, growing in force and effect with the passage of time, but this is not all; there is something more to be settled before the problem is solved, and a modern Dutch writer has himself put this something into words. "But the nation as a whole, the men and women, who had gone through famine, siege, and pestilence rather than submit to a foreign will and a foreign church, what has become of them?" asks Van Loo. "They have degenerated; they have settled into a mass of well-to-do, self-contented *rentiers*. Their energy and their enterprise are gone. Their money has been invested. Their dividends are expected to keep them in comfort." In other words, the Dutch, with a revolution behind them which scintillates with romance and grandeur, have deliberately dulled great possibilities with the corroding influence of commercialism. It is because of the great likeness which the genesis of the new Republic bears to that of the old that the American must stop and ask himself, in the midst of present strength, whether this nation is growing with an enduring growth—a broad and catholic growth—or whether there are signs here of that same narrowing influence, seen in self-indulgence and the deification of materialism.

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